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HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

IN CHARGE OF

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THE ADMINISTRATION OF A MENTAL CLINIC

The success or failure of any institution depends largely upon the efficiency of its administration. A modern, expensive, elaborately equipped building may fail in its purpose if the administration be an ill-advised or an inadequate one. The most perfect weapons in the hands of the inexperienced may prove a danger and a menace, poor workmen cannot turn out good work even though their tools be of the finest quality. In the same way, a poor and badly organized administration cannot develop a hospital or training school and serve the highest function of each, though it may have unlimited wealth at its command.

The value of an institution to the community is based upon its ability to meet the needs of that community and serve the purpose for which it was created; the efficiency with which this need is met depends upon the organization. It is, therefore, evident that given the need and the means, the most powerful factors to success are the administration and organization.

Among the very pressing needs today in the hospital and training school world is the mental hospital associated with the general hospital and medical school. One of the difficulties in establishing such institutions is that of administration.

On first thought one sees only the problems which present themselves as different, but when understood, the difficulties and differences fade, as it is realized that mental illness is as real as physical illness. The problem resolves itself, therefore, into efficient ways and means to care for a sick human being, and the only difference in providing for this is that which exists between the requirements in the care of a sick mind and a sick body. It is well to remember that each exists in or with the other.

The prevalent idea that many patients mentally sick cannot be adequately cared for in a hospital in close proximity to a general hospital is a mistake, as has been proved by valuable experiments. It

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is true that there are some handicaps as to space and environment, but such handicaps are more than made up for in many instances in the advantages afforded by such a relationship. If more mental hospitals or clinics were established in this way, the increase which statistics show in admissions to our state hospitals, no doubt, would be materially lessened.

Public opinion is still averse to seeking early advice through the isolated mental hospital as the old horror and stigma which more or less surround the "Asylum for the Insane" still hover over the state hospital of the present day and even over the private mental institution, beautiful though it may be. This is not the attitude of the public toward the general hospital. Statistics show that more patients are early seeking advice in the general hospital, and, it is reasonable to suppose, are being educated as to preventive measures. The same would be true if clinics for mental patients were established under like conditions, making prevention rather than cure, the issue.

In organizing a mental department in a general hospital the question of how it shall be administered is a problem, but not as complicated or difficult as one would suppose. The most important consideration is the chief supervisor of administration. Whether doctor or nurse, it must be one who understands not one alone but all sides of this many-sided problem. It must be a person who has a knowledge of general hospital administration, economic and medical, and at the same time a keen insight into the requirements of a hospital for the care of mentally ill patients. But a knowledge alone is not sufficient, one must have a comprehension of and a sympathy with this type of person and must understand the relationship existing between the mentally and physically ill patient, that he may be capable of making the necessary adjustments with the skill and efficiency required to meet the needs and promote the harmony of the entire institution.

A psychiatric clinic in connection with one of the large general hospitals and medical schools has been organized in this manner. The department is as much a part of the general hospital, medical school and nurse training school as is the medical or surgical department, and is administered on the same principles, with the variations of application necessary to meet adequately the demands presented.

The director of the department or clinic is the professor of psychiatry in the university. He directs, with his staff of assistants, the policy concerned with the treatment of the patients, medical, educational and research. The superintendent of the hospital is also the superintendent of this department and all policies relating to administration are dictated by him. The superintendent of nurses bears a like relationship

to the nursing school. To complete this general organization, a sub-organization has been formed directly within the clinic. To it, authority has been given to make all recommendations as to administration and nursing, and it represents within itself the superintendent of both the hospital and the training school. Before the building was completed, a chief or supervising nurse who had several years of general hospital executive experience, was appointed and given a year in which to study the problems directly associated with the administration and equipment of mental hospitals. Through this officer, the detailed administration of the clinic is carried on and she is directly responsible to the superintendent of the general hospital.

The director of the clinic and resident physicians consult with her as to methods and principles involved in the care of the patients. All requisitions for supplies and materials come through her office and are submitted on her recommendation to the superintendent for his approval. The nursing is directed by the principal of the training school, through the supervising nurse, who has charge of the educational work, both practical and theoretical.

Each ward of from 8 to 12 patients is under the supervision of a graduate nurse, both by day and by night. Thus the administration and nursing in the individual units continue the same organization and, through this medium, the central administration is kept in touch with all the problems and is therefore in a position to shape the policies.

The nurses in the training school are sent to this department as systematically as they are to any other department of the hospital and a definite number is changed each week. The total period of training is between two and three months. The methods of instruction are governed by the same principles underlying the care of patients in the general hospital, with variations compatible with the needs represented. The usual eight hour duty for pupil nurses is the schedule in this department, with additional time off at frequent intervals, as indicated by particular conditions; for it must be remembered that nursing in a mental hospital carries with it more nervous strain than work in a general hospital, even though the physical activity is much less. The chief point of difference in organizing the nursing in the mental hospital is that of numbers; at least twice the number of nurses per patient required in a general medical ward, is necessary to adequately meet the demands.

The same is true of the staff of physicians. Owing to the intense personal work required, the average number of hours spent with each patient is considerably greater than in any other type of hospital. Consequently, the proportion of physicians to patients must be greater.

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A great advantage to the patient is gained by being in a mental clinic in close proximity to a general hospital, in consultation through other departments. The various clinics in the dispensaries where expert advice may be had in surgery or medicine, are available. Patients from this department are found in the X-ray rooms, dental clinic, operating rooms or elsewhere, as often as are patients from the medical or surgical wards. Patients are transferred from one service freely to the other and it is no longer an unusual thing during a delirium associated with a physical condition to transfer the patient for a time to the wards of the mental clinic, where adequate care, without the restraint usually necessary in the general hospital, can be given. When the patient has sufficiently recovered he may be sent again to the service from which he formerly came. The close harmony in which the different specialists work is a great advantage to the patient and a means of general education to the public and, in fact, to the medical profession.

From the point of view of efficiency and economy also, the central administration organization has unlimited advantage over the organization of a complete unit system. To be sure, all classes of mental patients cannot be adequately cared for in this type of hospital, but if more mental clinics were established in general hospitals it would undoubtedly lessen the number of isolated mental hospitals required to serve the community.

Miss Goodrich, as president of the American Nurses' Association, is urging every nurse to cooperate actively with Mr. Hoover in the movement for the conservation of the country's food supply. To this end it is suggested that the question of food administration be included, if possible, in the programme of every meeting, that a speaker versed in the problem be obtained, and that all nurses inform themselves on the subject that they may be able to advise those families with which their professional service brings them in contact.